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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE Radio Service OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT Thursday, October 3, 1940.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "FALL QUESTIONS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, the Bureau of Animal Industry, and the Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Our questions today are aa varied in their way as the autumn leaves are varied in color and hue. In fact there's one question about the color of autumn leaves. And then there's a homemaker with a lot of green tomatoes on her hands, and another who asks about sugar-cured hams. Which shall we take first? Let's start with that last one.

The letter writer asks: "What does the term "sugar-cured" ham or bacon mean? Is sugar actually used in preparing the meat?"

And the Meat Inspection Division of the Bureau of Animal Industry returns a very positive affirmative. Sugar is used in curing much of the packaged sliced bacon you buy, and also in preparing the better smoked hams. Or something that furnishes sugar- like molasses.

One way of curing ham and bacon is called the "dry cure." Salt, saltpeter or sodium nitrite and sugar are rubbed into the meat before it is smoked. The other method starts by putting the hams in a pickle of salt and saltpeter or sodium nitrite, with sugar, until the meat is ready for smoking. Still another method is to inject the pickling mixture into the blood vessels of the meat.

Whichever way the salting is done, the ham and bacon is usually smoked. Hickory or some other hardwood is burned in the smokehouse to give an aromatic smoke. Soft woods containing resin can't be used. They would give the meat an undesirable flavor.

Next, the question about green tomatoes. "Every year we have a certain number of green tomatoes left on the vines when frost comes. How can I use some of these in cooking? And what is the best way to make green tomato pickles?"

The food specialists in the Bureau of Home Economics say you can use those green tomatoes in several different ways, just as they are. You can stew them or scallop them, or make some cream of green tomato soup, for example. Or dip thick slices of the tomatoes in egg and crumbs and fry them. Fry a few onion rings with them sometimes.

Then you might try a green tomato pie, made in about the same way as blackberry or any juicy fruit pie. That is, you prebake the under crust lightly to keep the juices from running out, and you also thicken the juice with a little cornstarch. Here's the complete recipe:

Cook 4 or 5 medium-sized green tomatoes until they are nearly tender. Flavor with a little salt, one-fourth teaspoon of cinnamon, and the juice of half a lemon. Mix 1-1/2 tablespoons of cornstarch with 3/4 cup of sugar and add to the tomato mixture. Cook until the cornstarch does not taste raw. Add 1 tablespoon of butter and pour into your prebaked pieshell. Cover with an upper crust and bake in a hot oven.

Or you might make a mock mincemeat pie, using green tomatoes and apples in the mincemeat.

Now about green tomato pickles. You can make either dilled green tomatoes or chopped pickle. For either kind, the first step is brining the green tomatoes. Select firm, freshly picked tomatoes of uniform size and wash them. If you are making only a small quantity of pickle, use a 2-quart glass jar for fermenting the tomatoes in brine. Use earthenware crocks for larger quantities.

Make a standard brine of 2 cups of salt,- 1 pint of vinegar, and 4

tablespoons of sugar to 2 gallons of water. This amount of brine is enough for about 12 pounds of green tomatoes.

Put a layer of dill and mixed spices in the bottom of each crock or jar. Add a clove of garlic if you like. Fill the containers with whole green tomatoes and add a second layer of dill and spices on top. If you are using fruit jars, fill them to overflowing and seal them partially. Add more brine as necessary, so that the tomatoes are continually covered by the brine. Keep the brine in crocks fully 2 inches above the tomatoes. Remove any scum that forms.

In about 2 weeks the tomatoes will be ready to use. Slice them and pack in sterilized jars, adding half a cup of fresh cider vinegar and some of the dill brine to fill the jars. The dill brine should be strained, boiled and cooled. Seal and store. You can also use these brined tomatoes in your preferred chopped pickle recipe.

We come now to the inquiry about autumn leaves. "Why do leaves on oak, maple, dogwood, and other trees change color in the fall?"

The Forest Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture says that in spite of the idea that frost has something to do with this change, the real reason is the chemical processes taking place in the tree.

The chlorophyll in the leaves gives them their green color, and it also supplies the food the tree needs. In the fall the tree begins to absorb what food materials are left in the leaves, to store up for use in the spring. The chlorophyll breaks up into the chemical substances which compose it. And some of these give leaves their yellow autumn color.

But if there is more sugar in the leaf than can be readily transferred back to the tree, the chlorophyll produces reds and other shades. Trees of the evergreen, or "coniferous" family, such as pines, do not lose their foliage

in the fall. The green coloring matter takes on a somewhat brownish tinge, and in the spring this gives way to a light green.

So now you know why the leaves change color in the autumn.

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